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SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [OVIP](#) [IR](#) [YM](#)

SUBJECT: FONMIN "SURPRISED" AT IRANIAN COMMENTS; SAYS
SALEH'S EID ADDRESS WILL COVER ISSUES OF IMPORTANCE TO USG

REF: A. 199863

[B](#). 199225

[C](#). 195442

Classified By: AMBASSADOR THOMAS C. KRAJESKI, FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

[1](#). (C) SUMMARY: FonMin Abubakr al-Qirbi told Ambassador on October 30 that the ROYG was "surprised" by Iranian President Ahmadi-Nejad's recent comments regarding Israel. Qirbi said they were likely meant to score domestic political points in what has become a "popularity contest" between the President and Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani. The FonMin said he did not believe Iran intended to declare war on Israel. The ROYG will not make a public statement, but will "offer advice" to the Iranian ambassador in Sanaa that this statement was "difficult to comprehend in the 21st century." Turning to President Saleh's imminent visit to the United States, Ambassador noted an October 28 statement by a ROYG official saying that the use of brokers in arms purchases would be rendered illegal. Qirbi predicted that the President would cover "many issues of importance to the United States" in his annual Eid al-Fitr address to the nation. END SUMMARY.

[2](#). (C) Responding to Ambassador's presentation of points contained in refs A and B, Qirbi said his government was "surprised and could not readily understand the aim" of the Iranian President's remarks about "wiping Israel off the map." He said the comments reflected negatively on Iran and its new president, who Qirbi believes was trying to gain domestic political points by making the statement. Ayatollah Khamanei had recently taken certain powers away from the president and transferred them to Rafsanjani, a move that has sparked a "popularity contest" between the two men. Qirbi said he hoped Rafsanjani would exert a moderating influence on the government, but said it was hard to predict what Rafsanjani would do, as his "position sways from time to time."

[3](#). (C) Subsequent Iranian Government statements had made clear that Iran did not plan on declaring war on Israel, Qirbi said. Asked if the ROYG would make a public statement condemning the president's statement, the FonMin replied that it was "not likely," but said his government would "offer advice" to the Iranian ambassador, noting that this sort of comment is "difficult to comprehend in the 21st century."

[4](#). (C) Turning to President Saleh's upcoming visit, Ambassador said he had told Saleh on October 25 that President Bush would be very interested in hearing about the ROYG's plan to bring the proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons under control (ref C). In that context, it was reassuring to see press statements by Yemeni officials on October 28 making it clear that the ROYG had "taken strict measures to ban the purchase of arms by brokers," and that "those found involved in bringing arms into the country will be held accountable as lawbreakers." Ambassador also said Saleh's positive statements in support of the political process in Iraq following his meeting with King Abdullah II of Jordan were helpful. Qirbi added that President Saleh's annual Eid address to the nation this week would cover these topics "and other issues of importance to the United States." Krajieski